

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

Service Area Background Information

Service Area Description

The Foster Care Program includes three service components united under one program umbrella: Foster Care Prevention and Family Preservation and Support Services; Foster Care Services and Independent Living Services. The focus of Foster Care Prevention, Preservation and Support Services is to provide services and interventions to maintain and strengthen the family unit while ensuring the safety of the child. Foster Care Prevention cases are those in which intervention is needed to prevent out-of-home and/or out-of-community placement of a child. Family Preservation and Support Services are flexible locality coordinated community-based programs that provide services to help children and families that are in crisis who need short-term support. Services may include "hard services" such as counseling and in-home services or "soft services" such as child care and material assistance. Services can be to reunify a child in foster care with the natural parent and adoption promotion and family preservation services can also be provided.

Foster Care services provide a temporary living solution for children who must be removed from their birth or adoptive parents or other legal caretakers due to abuse and neglect. Foster care is also a vehicle through which services to children who have not been abused or neglected but require placement outside their birth/adoptive home due to chronic mental health problems, delinquency or the caretakers inability to provide for the child's needs are provided. Foster care's mandate is to find a permanent home for a child in as timely a manner as possible. Permanent placements include: return to parent or previous legal custodian; placement with relatives with subsequent transfer of custody; adoption, permanent foster care; independent living or another planned permanent living arrangement. Foster care placement and services are available throughout the 120 local departments of social services.

The purpose of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), also referred to as the Independent Living Program, is to design and implement programs that will identify children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age and provide services to help these children make the transition to self-sufficiency. Services include, but are not limited to, high school assistance, post-secondary/vocational assistance, life skills training, health education, career exploration and planning, job readiness training, housing assistance, and mentoring. In addition, young people who left foster care after they turned 18 years old but have not attained age 21, can receive aftercare services, including counseling, employment, education and room and board. As required by CFCIP, youth must participate directly in developing their program activities and accept personal responsibility for achieving independence.

Service Area Alignment to Missio

The Foster Care Program supports the Virginia Department of Social Services mission through helping children, both within their own homes and those who are removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect, develop strong futures through the provision of services to strengthen the family; find permanent homes in which the child may grow up; and provide services to aid on the transition into adulthood as productive citizens of their community and the Commonwealth.

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

Service Area Statutory Authority

Title IV-B of the Social Security Act requires federal expenditures for State public child welfare agencies in establishing, extending and strengthening child welfare services. These funds support family preservation services, reunification services and safe and stable family services. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act provides funding to enable the state to provide foster care and transitional independent living programs for children, adoption assistance for children with special needs. The federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and Section 477 of the Title IV-E of the Social Security Act established the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) and replaced the former Independent Living Initiative (established in 1986). The CFCIP increased funding for independent living activities; offers increased assistance for young people ages 18-21 who are leaving care; emphasizes the importance of securing permanent families for young people in foster care; gives states the option to extend Medicaid to young people transitioning from foster care; and increases state accountability for outcomes for young people transitioning out of care.

The Code of Virginia provides statutory authority for the provision of all Foster Care Program activities through the following Titles, Chapters and Section: Title 63.2, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 - General provisions, State Social Services and Local Boards of Social Services; §63.2-410 - State pool of funds under the Comprehensive Services Act ; 63.2 Chapter 9 - Foster Care; Title 63.2 Chapter 11 - Implementation of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children; 63.2-1509 - Failure to report; Title 16.1 §§16.1-251; 16.1-252, 16.1-277.01, 16.1-277.02, 16.1-278.2, 16.2-278.3, 16.1-278.4, 16.1-281, 16.1-282, 16.1-282.1, 16.1-283. Title 22.1 §22.1-287.D.3 - Limitation on access to records.

Service Area Customer Base

Customer(s)	Served	Potential
AmeriCorps Program	3	3
Children and families (potential unlimited)	23,801	0
Faith Based Organizations (served unknown; potential unlimited)	0	0
Federal agencies (potential unlimited)	1	1
General Public (potential unlimited)	4,025	0
Local Departments of Social Services	120	120
Media (potential unlimited)	50	0
Non-custodial parents (potential unlimited)	25	0
Policy Makers (served unknown; potential unlimited)	0	0
Providers (potential unlimited)	150	0
Virginia Youth Advisory Council (potential unlimited)	50	0
Vulnerable adults (potential unlimited)	300	0

Anticipated Changes In Service Area Customer Bas

The numbers of children entering foster care are anticipated to increase given current trends. Families receiving services (including vulnerable adults) and the number of faith based organizations being provided with products and services through foster care are anticipate to increase with more comprehensive data gathering.

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

Service Area Partners

AmeriCorps Program

Community Action Agencies

Local Departments of Social Services

Norfolk State University

Private Child Placing Agencies and Faith-based groups

State Agencies

Virginia Community College System

Virginia Institute for Social Services Training Activities (VISSTA)

Virginia Intercommunity Transition Council

Virginia Tech

Volunteer Organizations

Service Area Products and Services

- Support of organizations serving communities
- Recruitment of volunteers and training on management of volunteers
- Services to promote family stability
- Services to protect vulnerable adults
- Economic assistance to low income families/individuals or nutrition, child care, health care eligibility, and financial assistance to low income families/individuals
- Financial support for children
- Services that promote sufficiency
- Services to protect children
- Services to ensure that children have permanent homes
- Support Services (i.e. HR,IS, etc.)
- Independent Living training for Local departments of social services staff
- Training professionals in kinship care
- Training kinship care providers

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

Factors Impacting Service Area Products and Services

The factors impacting products and services for older youth include the lack of adequate funding and resources for providing independent living services and the lack of community support and involvement with these young people. These are especially critical components of helping older youth successfully transition to adulthood given the nationwide trend of increased numbers of youth over age 13 entering the foster care system and exiting to independent living situations.

Funding for prevention and in-home services to prevent foster care placement is inadequate, resulting in children entering the foster care system solely to receive needed mental health and physical health treatment. Virginia law does not mandate that prevention services be provided in order to prevent the possibility of placement in foster care placement. Foster care placement is more expensive than in-home prevention services. The lack of adequate funding for prevention services therefore places a greater financial burden on the citizens of the Commonwealth to fund sometimes unnecessary foster care placements.

Anticipated Changes To Service Area Products and Service

The Department will do intensive outreach for the Independent Living Program (IL) including printing IL brochures in different languages to increase public awareness of foster care youth needing more support and services from the communities. Publications and forms for all foster care services will be printed in both English and Spanish to meet the needs of an increasing Hispanic population in Virginia. Due to the Child and Family Services Program Improvement Plan and the federal requirement to demonstrably increase outcomes for children and families, it is anticipated that local departments of social services and the Virginia Department of Social Services will be required to increase the amount of and accessibility to services for children and youth involved in foster care.

Service Area Financial Summary

Funding for the Foster Care program comes from general funds (43.4%) and federal funds (56.6%). The federal funds come from various sources, including Title IV-E Foster Care, Title IV-B Part II (Promoting Safe and Stable Families), Chafee Independent Living and Education and Training Vouchers, and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG).

	<u>Fiscal Year 2007</u>		<u>Fiscal Year 2008</u>	
	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund
Base Budget	\$40,172,116	\$52,322,989	\$40,172,116	\$52,322,989
Changes To Base	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SERVICE AREA TOTAL	\$40,172,116	\$52,322,989	\$40,172,116	\$52,322,989

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

Service Area Objectives, Measures, and Strategies

Objective 46901.01

To improve the accuracy of Title IV-E eligibility determinations/re-determinations and Title IV-E payments for children in foster care

Federal Title IV-E money is the largest and only uncapped source of foster care funding for children in Virginia. The federal government conducts regular audits to assess whether the Commonwealth is in substantial compliance with federal regulatory requirements regarding Title IV-E Eligibility criteria and payment accuracy. The next review is scheduled in 2006.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Deliver high-quality customer-focused services
(This objective aligns with strategic planning goal #4; delivering high-quality customer-focused services, through building the skill base of workers whose job it is to accurately assess Title IV-E eligibility for every child entering foster care. By accessing the maximum allowable federal funds possible for those children eligible for such funds, additional state funding is available to provide high quality services for those children not eligible for federal dollars. This objective aligns with Long-Term Objective #5 of the Counsel on Virginia's Future, "Inspire and support Virginians toward healthy lives and strong and resilient families" .)

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

- **Measure 46901.01.01**

Cases that pass the federal requirement for Title IV-E

Measure Type: Output

Measure Frequency: Quarterly

Measure Baseline: New measure, baseline data not available. Baseline will be established using FY06 data.

Measure Target: Specific target will be determined once baseline is established.

Measure Source and Calculation:

Monthly Frequency: To prepare for the federal review, each of 120 local departments of social services is undergoing a pre-review audit of 76% of all currently eligible Title IV-E cases. Data on both appropriately applied eligibility and appropriate payment disbursements is collected and maintained in an Excel spreadsheet. Both agency and state-wide data regarding percentage of compliance is calculated monthly.

One-time Only Data Frequency: The federal audit will review a random selection of 150 cases statewide, pulled from the Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS) data VDSS is required to submit to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on a six month basis.

Objective 46901.01 Has the Following Strategies:

- Conduct pre-audit case reviews in 120 local departments of social services by March 2006.
- Conduct a minimum of 15 statewide trainings on appropriately determining Title IV-E Eligibility.
- Coordinate a Title IV-E Eligibility Advisory Committee to meet regularly during the pre-audit review phase.
- Develop and disseminate a standardized case file format and standardized payment record to be used fro the 150 cases pulled for the actual audit.
- Revise Title IV-E Eligibility Policy and distribute to all local departments of social services.

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

Objective 46901.02

To promote safe and stable living situations for children and families to prevent out-of-home placements

Many families and children throughout Virginia experience chronic crisis situations due to incidents of abuse and neglect, mental health and substance abuse problems, and limited material resources. This objective focuses on the efforts of the PSSF program to support the development and maintenance by localities of an array of flexible community-based services to meet the needs of families and children within that locality who come to the attention of the child welfare system.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Enhance the independence, well-being and personal responsibility of customers
(By providing culturally sensitive and diverse prevention services information to the larger Virginia community, children and families of multiple ethnic origins can become aware of services designed to keep children in their own homes and communities and allow families to receive the assistance and support they need to prevent further abuse, neglect and/or foster care placement. This objective aligns with Long-Term Objective #5 of the Counsel on Virginia's Future, "Inspire and support Virginians toward healthy lives and strong and resilient families" and Virginia Strategic Plan #1.)

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

● **Measure 46901.02.01**

Children entering foster care who receive prevention services

Measure Type: Output

Measure Frequency: Quarterly

Measure Baseline: New measure, baseline data not available. Baseline will be established using FY06 data.

Measure Target: Specific target will be determined once baseline is established.

Measure Source and Calculation:

Locality Community Needs Assessments (with support from OASIS, Tri-Annual/Year-End reports, PSSF ACCESS database and Locality Automated System for Expenditure Reimbursement (LASER).

Objective 46901.02 Has the Following Strategies:

- Conduct follow up monitoring via telephone calls with localities that do not submit the tri-annual/year-end reports by the due dates.
- Provide training on prevention services statewide and outcome evaluation models.

Objective 46901.03

To identify minimum competencies needed by Independent Living Coordinators

Many local departments of social services have staff members devoted to the provision of independent living services for older youth in foster care. This objective focuses on revising policy and identifying the skills these workers must possess to enhance the likelihood of these youth successfully transitioning into adulthood

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Deliver high-quality customer-focused services
(This objective aligns with strategic planning goal #4, delivering high-quality customer-focused services, through building the skill base of workers who work with older youth transitioning out of the foster care system. It also supports the Council on Virginia's Future long term objective to "inspire and support Virginians toward healthy lives and strong, resilient families")

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

- **Measure 46901.03.01**

Social Workers that have completed competency training

Measure Type: Output

Measure Frequency: Quarterly

Measure Baseline: New measure, baseline data not available. Baseline will be established using FY06 data.

Measure Target: Specific target will be determined once baseline is established.

Measure Source and Calculation:

The data needed will be developed using national data on child welfare worker competencies.

Objective 46901.03 Has the Following Strategies:

- Identify service-based competencies for child welfare.
- Identify workgroup members and set meeting dates.
- Review national standards and research relevant to worker competencies in child welfare and specifically in working with older youth transitioning out of foster care.
- Determine how to assess the competencies.
- Use the Department's Permanency Advisory Committee to assist in analyzing and revising current foster care independent living policy.

Objective 46901.04

To reduce the number of foster care placements

One federal outcome assessed in the Child and Family Services Review concerns the number of placements a child in foster care has during a foster care episode. Fewer numbers of placements are less traumatic for children's over-all mental health and well-being. Children in Virginia often have more than two placements during their initial twelve month period in care. This is above the national standard for this outcome. Assessment homes are sometimes used at the beginning of each foster care episode to assist localities in determining what type of long-term placement would best suit the child's needs. The use of assessment homes is designed to decrease the number of placements for children in foster care by accurately "matching" the child with the placement early in the placement process.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Deliver high-quality customer-focused services
(Increasing children's stability in a foster care placement serves to reduce the risk of trauma and the development of chronic mental health problems over time. This objective aligns with strategic planning goal #4 which is to deliver high-quality customer-focused services and Long-Term Objective #5 of the Counsel on Virginia's Future "Inspire and support Virginians toward healthy lives and strong and resilient families")

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Foster Care (46901)

- **Measure 46901.04.01**

The number of children that remain in two or less foster care placements.

Measure Type: Output

Measure Frequency: Quarterly

Measure Baseline: New measure, baseline data not available. Baseline will be established using FY06 data.

Measure Target: Specific target will be determined once baseline is established. (Projected to be: Increase the number of foster children that experience two or less placements during their first twelve months in foster care by 1% per year)

Measure Source and Calculation:

Data will be used from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) submissions the Department makes to the federal government. Federal reporting requirements include states reporting on the number of foster care placements children have during their first twelve months of a foster care episode. Children in foster care during a specified time period and who have been in care for twelve months or more will be targeted for comparison.

Localities will be surveyed to identify those that use assessment homes as the first placement for a child. For localities using assessment homes, AFCARS data will be used to identify the average number of foster care placements in those localities who use assessment homes as compared to those localities who do not.

A comparison will be made regarding number of placements in the initial twelve month period for children placed in assessment homes versus children not placed in assessment homes.

Objective 46901.04 Has the Following Strategies:

- Conduct a survey of localities to determine who uses assessment homes.
- Provide follow-up phone calls as needed to those localities who do not respond to the survey.
- Use localities known to use assessment homes to help identify other localities that also use such homes.
- Use AFCARS data for a specified period of time to compare numbers of foster care placements for children placed in assessment homes versus those not placed in assessment homes.